

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES February 7, 2005

Secretary Geoffrey Maker called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:00 p.m. in Room 438 of the State House, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Representative Patricia Blanchette, Jay Bradshaw, Representative Richard Brown, John Dean, Chief Darrel Fournier, Geoffrey Maker, Harty Norris, Jethro Pease, David Wacker, Leslie Wiles (for Bill Williams), Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (staff). Members excused included Senator Bruce Bryant, Chief Jeffrey Cammack, John Cannon, Art Cleaves, Representative Robert Duplessie, Senator Richard Nass and Charles Soltan. Edward Johnston was absent from the meeting. Alex McPhedran attended as guest of the Fire Commission.

Fire Commission members welcomed Representative Richard Brown of South Berwick as the third Maine House of Representative member. Representative Brown is a former town manager and comes from a fire service family.

A motion by Dave Wacker, seconded by Jethro Pease, to accept the minutes of January 3, 2005. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports of Committees

The Spring Conference Committee reports that final plans for the Blaine House Conference on Emergency First Response at the Augusta Civic Center on Friday, March 11th are on schedule. The brochures have been printed and will be distributed in the next two weeks.

The Traffic Direction Committee distributed draft language of proposed legislation. The Traffic Direction committee has met several times and exchanged comments via email. The committee has attempted to draft a “consensus document” and recognizes the legislation is needed more in those communities with volunteer fire and police departments. The proposed bill includes provisions for training. Members also agreed to share the draft legislation with various interest groups including the Maine Fire Chiefs and Police Chiefs. (Draft language attached)

A motion by Jethro Pease, seconded by Mike Albert, to accept the draft report from the Traffic Direction Committee and submit legislation to allow firefighters and emergency service personnel to direct traffic during emergencies. The motion passed unanimously.

The Training Facilities Committee reports that a powerpoint presentation is available to go with the committee's final report. Once approved, it will be made available on the Fire Commission's website.

Old Business

Members received copies of an article titled "Truss Truce...It's Time for the Fire Service to Make Peace with an Old Nemesis" printed in FireRescue Magazine. The article describes truss construction and that knowledge of the structure's construction is crucial to preventing injuries. Members were informed that the State Fire Marshal's Office is proceeding with rulemaking regarding marking structures using truss construction. The proposed rules will be patterned on the Bangor ordinance on truss construction.

The Fire Commission's Health Care Study bill (L.D. 10) was referred to the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee and had a public hearing in January. The first work session was February 3rd. Other bills of interest to Fire Commission members are L.D. 104 "An Act to Require Cigarettes Sold in Maine To Be Fire-Safe" and L.D. 243 "An Act to Allow Emergency Responders to Equip Their Vehicles with 2 Emergency Flashing Lights". Members were updated on the status of both bills. During discussion on L.D. 243, members were reminded that in late 2003 the Fire Commission studied the issue of the use of lights and sirens on the personal vehicles of emergency responders en route to a fire or other emergency. The Fire Commission sent the Transportation Committee a letter with recommendations in February 2004.

A motion by Jay Bradshaw, seconded by Jethro Pease, to send the Transportation Committee a letter supporting the recommendations in the February 2004 letter and not supporting the changes to present Maine law that would change the definition of an emergency vehicle. The motion passed unanimously.

Members also discussed L.D. 385 "An Act To Limit the Liability of Ambulance Services in Maine" and whether the Fire Commission should endorse the legislation. Members were concerned with the complexity of the bill and agreed the bill fell within the scope of the Fire Commission. Members felt the bill could have ramifications for municipal fire departments.

A motion by Jethro Pease, seconded by Jay Bradshaw, that the Fire Commission endorse L.D 385. The motion passed with three members opposed (Harty Norris, Darrel Fournier and Jack Berry) and one member abstained (Dave Wacker).

A lengthy discussion followed on L.D. 468, the Governor's budget bill. Members expressed concern and frustration with including new rules (online fire

permits) in the budget bill without informing the Fire Commission and others in the fire service.

A motion by Jeff Maker, seconded by Jethro Pease, that the Fire Commission defers action and give the Forest Service representative the opportunity to relay the Fire Commission's concerns to the Forest Service. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members discussed the December 2004 “*Final Report of the Task Force to Study Parity and Portability of Retirement Benefits for Stet Law Enforcement Officers, Municipal and County Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters*”. Members expressed concern with the lack of firefighter input and communication with members of the task force. Members suggesting asking task force members to attend the March meeting.

The first meeting of the Legislative Fire Caucus and Fire Service Day at the State House 2005 were reviewed by Fire Commission members. Although many legislators were caucusing on the tax reform bill, members were encouraged by the attendance at the initial meeting. Members spoke of the need to inform legislators of fire service issues and how to be more effective.

New Business

Fire Commission members discussed the March 10th Legislative Night at the Ground Round Restaurant from 4pm-8pm. Maine Municipal Association (MMA) will be printing invitations. Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, Maine Fire Chiefs, Maine Fire Training and Education and the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission will be this year's hosts and share expenses.

Members reviewed the suggested meeting schedule and agreed to meet at the State House during the legislative session and attempt to schedule the Fire Caucus meetings on the same days. Members also agreed to move the Monday, March 7th meeting to Thursday, March 10th at 1:00pm so members could reduce their travel to Augusta.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette

Please mark your calendars:

Thursday, March 10 th	Regular Meeting	State House	1:00pm
Thursday, March 10 th	Legislative Night	Ground Round	4-8:00pm
Friday, March 11 th	Spring Conference	ACC	8-4:00pm
Monday, April 4 th	Regular Meeting	State House	1:00pm
Monday, May 2 nd	Regular Meeting	State House	1:00pm